

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 NEA-06 ISO-00 EA-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5657

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 14861

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, UK, CE, MV, BG

SUBJECT: UK RELATIONS WITH SRI LANKA AND MALDIVES

SUMMARY: BRITISH MINISTER WILL VISIT SRI LANKA AND BANGLADESH. BRITISH AID TO SRI LANKA LIKELY TO CONTINUE NEXT YEAR, AT SLIGHTLY HIGHER LEVEL THAN THIS YEAR. ANTICIPATING PROBABLE DEPARTURE FROM GAN ISLAND AIR BASE, BRITISH WILL BE INVESTIGATING WAYS TO ASSIST MALDIVES ECONOMY FURTHER, BOTH DIRECTLY AND THROUGH ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK. INDIANS, CHINESE, SOVIETS ALL DEMONSTRATING INTEREST IN WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH GAN ISLAND IF BRITISH LEAVE. END SUMMARY.

1. JOHN GRANT, PARLIAMENTARY UNDERSECRETARY, MINISTRY
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OF OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT, WILL TAKE OCCASION OF COMMON-

WEALTH MEDICAL CONFERENCE TO LOOK INTO AID POSSIBILITIES IN SRI LANKA. HE WILL STAY ABOUT FIVE DAYS NEXT WEEK (BEGINNING ABOUT NOVEMBER 18) AND GO TO BANGLADESH FOR SIMILAR VISIT WEEK AFTER. WE UNDERSTAND US AND UK EMBASSIES ARE LOCALLY IN TOUCH ON THIS. FCO'S CHALMERS TELLS US THAT UK AID TO SRI LANKA NEXT YEAR IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE AT SLIGHTLY HIGHER LEVEL THAN THIS YEAR'S.

2. CHALMERS ALSO CHARACTERIZES RECENT VISIT HERE (OCTOBER 26 - NOVEMBER 2) OF MALDIVES PRIME MINISTER ZAKI AS EXCEEDINGLY SUCCESSFUL IN TERMS OF GOODWILL GENERATED. ZAKI HAD AUDIENCE WITH QUEEN AND SAW PRIME MINISTER, FONSEC, MINISTER OF DEFENSE, ETC. WHILE TIMING WAS AWKWARD, AS FINAL DECISIONS ON UK DEFENSE REVIEW HAD NOT BEEN TAKEN, HMG MINISTERS MADE IT CLEAR TO ZAKI THAT BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM GAN ISLAND IS REAL POSSIBILITY. ZAKI IN TURN NOTED TENTATIVE INTEREST IN GAN BEING DEMONSTRATED BY SOVIETS, INDIANS, CHINESE, IF BRITISH LEAVE.

3. SINCE DEPARTURE FROM GAN WOULD MEAN UNEMPLOYMENT FOR SOME 600 LOCAL EMPLOYEES, BRITISH FEEL OBLIGED TO HELP MALDIVES ECONOMICALLY. THEY WILL BE LOOKING INTO AID OPPORTUNITIES, THOUGH FIRST PROBLEM IS TO CREATE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR SUCH AID, PROBABLY THROUGH BRITISH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. ZAKI SPOKE OF AID FOR HANDICRAFTS AND TOURISM IN ADDITION TO FISHING WHICH IS ALREADY BEING ASSISTED. BRITISH ALSO INTEND TO HELP MALDIVES WITH APPLICATIONS TO ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, SINCE SCOPE OF PROJECTS IN THE MALDIVES ABOUT RIGHT FOR THAT BANK.

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